

In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) Squeegee apparatus for applying solder paste to circuits comprising:

a squeegee blade having a pair of elongated face sides spaced apart by selected thickness and a pair of elongated substantially parallel narrow sides spaced apart by a selected width, said elongated face sides and said elongated narrow sides joined together at squeegee operating edges;

a slightly resilient clamping structure having a front portion and a backing portion, said front portion and backing portion defining an elongated rectangular cavity for receiving said squeegee blade, said cavity having a depth less than said selected width, first and second long edges, and a short dimension separating said first and second long edges, said short dimension having less than said selected thickness such that said clamping structure applies a gripping force to said squeegee blade when received by said cavity; and

a plurality of fasteners received by said clamping structure for increasing said gripping force applied to said squeegee blade;

said clamping structure defining said cavity for receiving said squeegee blade further defining relief spaces disposed therein to accommodate expansive distortion of said squeegee blade into said relief spaces when secured by said clamping structure.

2. (previously presented) The squeegee apparatus of claim 1, wherein said backing portion includes an extension beyond and along said first long edge of said substantially rectangular cavity to reduce flexing of said squeegee blade resulting from a force applied perpendicular to one of said elongated face sides.

3. (previously presented) The squeegee apparatus of claim 2, wherein said second long edge of said cavity defines a lip for gripping said squeegee blade.

4. (previously presented) The squeegee apparatus of claim 1, wherein said clamping structure is made for hard rubber.

5. (previously presented) The squeegee apparatus of claim 1, wherein said fasteners are threaded bolts.

6. (previously presented) The squeegee apparatus of claim 5, wherein said clamping structure further comprises embedded threaded insert embedded in said backing portion for receiving said threaded bolts.

7. (previously presented) The squeegee apparatus of claim 1, wherein said squeegee blade is free of mounting apertures.

8. (previously presented) The squeegee apparatus of claim 1, wherein said squeegee blade is a parallel parallelepiped with four long edges and wherein all four edges may be used as operating squeegee edges.

9. (previously presented) The squeegee apparatus of claim 1, wherein said squeegee blade is made of rubber.

10. (previously presented) The squeegee apparatus of claim 1, wherein said squeegee apparatus further includes solder paste overflow guards located perpendicular to each of said ends of said squeegee blade.

11-18 (cancelled)

19. (new) The squeegee apparatus of claim 1, wherein said relief spaces are disposed at a pair of opposing corners of said squeegee blade.

20. (new) The squeegee apparatus of claim 1, wherein said relief spaces extend along the entire length of said squeegee blade.

21. (new) The squeegee apparatus of claim 19, wherein said relief spaces extend along the entire length of said squeegee blade.